

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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11

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-20 NSC-07 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10

NSAE-00 PA-04 RSC-01 USIA-15 PRS-01 SP-03 SAJ-01

SAM-01 DRC-01 /090 W

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R 171542Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8924

INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 7455

1. PRAVDA MAY 17 REPORTS PRESIDENT'S STAR-NEWS INTERVIEW ON WATERGATE, INDICATING THAT PRESIDENT SAID HE WAS NOT GUILTY, WOULD NOT RESIGN OR TEMPORARILY TRANSFER AUTHORITY TO VICE-PRESIDENT, AND WOULD GO THROUGH ENTIRE PROCESS IF HOUSE VOTED TO BRING CASE TO SENATE FOR TRIAL.

2.COMMENT: MEDIA COVERAGE OF WATERGATE REMAINS MINIMAL. PRIVATELY, HOWEVER, WE HAVE DETECTED STRONGER CONCERN AMONG SOVIET OFFICIALS THAN A MONTH AGO. MEMBER OF USA INSTITUTE INFORMED US THIS WEEK THAT MAJOR STUDY OF WATERGATE HAS JUST BEEN COMPLETED, DRAWING ON ALL RESOURCES OF INSTITUTE. STUDY REPORTEDLY CONCLUDES THAT CHANCE OF SUCCESSFUL IMPEACHMENT IS NOT GREAT IN POLITICAL TERMS, ALTHOUGH LEGAL ASPECTS MIGHT OFFER SUFFICIENT GROUNDS. DESPITE SOVIET PRESS REPORTING OF PRESIDENT'S STATEMENTS REITERATING INTENTION TO VISIT USSR, CHIEF OF MFA USA DIVISION KORNIYENKO HAS EXPRESSED SOME CONCERN ABOUT WHEN AN ADVANCE PARTY MIGHT BE SENT TO MOSCOW TO PREPARE FOR PRESIDENT'S VISIT, AND OTHER OFFICIALS, JOURNALISTS AND SCHOLARS HAVE ALSO SOUGHT ASSURANCES THAT VISIT WILL TAKE PLACE. AMERICAN RESIDENT JOURNALISTS ARE NOW INQUIRING PERSISTENTLY RE TIMING OF ADVANCE PARTY.

STOESSEL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, CORRUPTION, POLITICAL SITUATION, SPEECHES, CENTRAL GOVERNMENT, NEWSPAPERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 17 MAY 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GarlanWA
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974MOSCOW07455
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740123-0770
From: MOSCOW
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740539/aaaabibz.tel
Line Count: 60
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GarlanWA
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 11 JUN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <11 JUN 2002 by elyme>; APPROVED <25 FEB 2003 by GarlanWA>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRAVDA MAY 17 REPORTS PRESIDENT,S STAR-NEWS INTERVIEW ON WATERGATE
TAGS: PFOR, US, UR, PRAVDA, (NIXON, RICHARD M)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005